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To: The Senate Natural Resources Committee

FR: Dwayne Umbarger

DT: February 3, 2015

RE: Opposition to SB 97

Chairman Powell and members of the committee, I am submitting testimony in opposition to SB 97. SB 97 amends the Dangerous Regulated Animal Act and allows the public to come into contact with dangerous regulated animals weighing 40 pounds or less. Tigers, lions, cheetahs and other big cats are dangerous animals at any weight. This bill sends the wrong message to our citizens and guests.

The dangerous regulated animal act became law in 2006, after my constituent Haley Hilderbrand was attacked and killed by a tiger while having her senior picture taken. According to Ronda Good, Haley's mother, Haley was scheduled to have her picture taken with baby tigers, however the handler decided the babies were too "rambunctious" and used a mature tiger instead.

As a primary sponsor of SB 578 the dangerous regulated animal act, I can tell you that the legislation was written to protect the public. We intentionally banned private citizens from having physical contact with lions, tigers, and bears. During the hearings Tanganyika Wildlife Park asked the committee to adopt an exception to the legislation to permit public contact with dangerous animals weighing 40 pounds or less. The committee rejected this amendment and passed the bill.

Today, I ask you not to set the Kansas back in time and risk public safety for commercial gain. The public and especially children need to observe dangerous animals from a safe distance and learn they are wild and dangerous, not cuddly pets.

While I assume that Tanganyika Wildlife Park has the best intentions for public safety, errors in judgement happen. In 2014 Tanganyika was cited by the USDA for allowing unsafe contact with a primate. Staff at Tanganyika allowed a lemur to interact with and sit on a human infant who was in a carrier on the ground. The U.S. Department of Agriculture determined that the interaction, "resulted in risk of disease transmission, injury to the public, and injury/stress [to] the animal."¹

In closing I respectfully request that you protect the public from contact with dangerous regulated animals and reject SB 97. Thank you